

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 KABUL 1494

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN 1494 VICE 1404)

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: AMGT, PSFR, AF
SUBJECT: 1978 ANNUAL POLICY ASSESSMENT -- PART II: APPROACHES
TO ACHIEVING OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

REFS: (A) KABUL 413 (B) 77 STATE 291277 (C) 77 KABUL 2144 AND
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1. THIS MESSAGE PRESENTS THE MOST SUBSTANTIVE PORTIONS OF PART
II OF OUR 1978 ANNUAL POLICY ASSESSMENT (SEE KABUL A-015).
IT INCLUDES MOST OF THE SUMMARY PLUS THE DISCUSSION OF TWO
POLICY ISSUES OF MAJOR CONCERN.

2. SUMMARY: SEVEN OVERALL GOALS AND 18 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES DE-
TERMINE OUR POLICIES TOWARD AFGHANISTAN. THE CONSENSUS OF THE
U.S. MISSION IN KABUL IS THAT THESE ARE REASONABLE AND
APPROPRIATE. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF OUR ECONOMIC AID LEVELS AND
EMBASSY STAFFING TO HANDLE TRADE PROMOTION, WE CONSIDER PRE-
SENT RESOURCES ADEQUATE TO MEET OUR AIMS.

3. THIS YEAR AGAIN THE POLICY REVIEW FOR THE U.S. MISSION IN
AFGHANISTAN WAS KICKED OFF BY A STUDY BY A GROUP OF JUNIOR AND
MIDDLE GRADE OFFICERS REPRESENTING ALL ELEMENTS OF THE MISSION.
THAT STUDY WAS THEN EXTENSIVELY DISCUSSED WITH THE GROUP BY
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THE FULL COUNTRY TEAM. THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE VIEWS
WHICH EMERGED IN THIS YEAR'S REVIEW TOGETHER WITH MY CONCLUSIONS.

4. AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE AND REGIONAL STABILITY. THERE WAS CON-
SIDERABLE DEBATE ABOUT SOVIET INTENTIONS TOWARD AFGHANISTAN,
WITH SOME OFFICERS EXPRESSING THE VIEW THAT WE EXAGGERATE AND
OVER-RESPOND TO A SOVIET THREAT. THE MAJORITY VIEW WHICH I SHARE

WAS THAT WHILE THE SOVIETS ARE RELAXED ABOUT THE PRESENT SITUATION, THEY MIGHT DECIDE PARTICULARLY IF THEY PERCEIVE THREATS TO THEIR INTERESTS, OR IF OPPORTUNITIES SHOULD ARISE IN THE WAKE OF DAOUD'S DEPARTURE FROM THE SCENT, TO TRY TO EXPAND THEIR INFLUENCE HERE. IF, THIS WERE TO OCCUR, THIS WOULD THREATEN REGIONAL STABILITY AND HENCE OUR INTERESTS. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT OUR PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO MEET OUR OWN OBJECTIVES AND NOT TO RESPOND TO SOVIET CURRENT OR POTENTIAL MOVES. ALL U.S. PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN, IT WAS CONCLUDED, ASSIST THE MAINTENANCE OF AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE TO ONE DEGREE OR ANOTHER.

5. AFGHAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. OUR LIVELIEST DISCUSSION CONCERNED OUR AID AND PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS. WHILE IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED THAT THESE PROGRAMS SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO MEET BASIC HUMAN NEEDS, THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM THAT THEY ARE NOT NOW DOING SO BECAUSE OF THE INABILITY OF THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT TO ADMINISTER PROJECTS WHICH ARE SUITABLE FOR US TO ASSIST. OUR AID LEVELS, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE BEEN STEADILY DECLINING SINCE THE "NEW LOOK" OF THE 1973 FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT. AS FOR THE PEACE CORPS, AFGHAN GOVERNMENT POLICY HAS VIRTUALLY ELIMINATED VOLUNTEERS FROM RURAL SITES. A FINAL CONSIDERATION EXPRESSED WAS THAT THE AID PROGRAM NOT ONLY IS DECLINING IN TERMS OF ACTUAL ASSISTANCE BEING PROVIDED, BUT IS ALSO BECOMING LESS AND LESS VALUABLE FROM A POLITICAL STANDPOINT AS AID'S PROJECTS ARE GENERALLY SMALL IN SCOPE AND IN MORE REMOTE AREAS OF THE

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COUNTRY.

6. WHAT ARE THE ANSWERS TO THESE CRITICISMS? FIRST, THE AID MISSION IS CURRENTLY FRAMING ITS STRATEGY. MY HOPE IS THAT IT WILL BE ABLE TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS IN HEALTH AND EDUCATION, AND IN DUE COURSE IN AGRICULTURE, WHICH WILL BE BASED ON BROAD SECTORAL APPROACHES, WILL ATTRACT THE NECESSARY AFGHAN COMMITMENTS AND WILL ENABLE AID GREATLY TO EXPAND ITS ASSISTANCE LEVELS HERE OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. SECONDLY, IT IS MY HOPE THAT THE EXISTING AND PLANNED PROJECTS WHICH ARE NOT ONLY DEVELOPMENTALLY SOUND BUT ALSO POLITICALLY VISIBLE (E.G., UNIVERSITY DORMITORY FOR RURAL WOMEN, HELMAND PROJECT) WILL BE SUSTAINED. AS FOR THE PEACE CORPS, WE WILL BE STRIVING TO EXPAND THE SMALL BEGINNINGS MADE IN RECENT MONTHS TO INJECT PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS BACK INTO RURAL AREAS AND INTO HEALTH PROGRAMS. WE WILL ALSO BE TRYING TO LIMIT PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS IN KABUL TO THOSE WHICH TRAIN AFGHANS WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN MEETING THE BASIC HUMAN NEEDS OF THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS. BUT NOBODY SHOULD THINK THAT THERE WILL BE SMOOTH SLEDDING FOR EITHER THE AID OR PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS HERE FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. THE SHORTAGE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS AND SYSTEMS IN THE COUNTRY WILL CONTINUE TO HAMPER OUR BEST EFFORTS.

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7. NARCOTICS. THE BASIC QUESTION RAISED IN OUR DISCUSSION OF OUR NARCOTICS PROGRAMS HERE WAS HOW FAR WE SHOULD PUSH THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN IN THE LIGHT OF OUR OTHER OBJECTIVES. IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED THAT OUR ANTI-TRAFFICKING AND POPPY ERADICATION PROGRAMS WILL TAKE A LONG TIME TO SHOW MUCH SUCCESS. THE QUESTION IS WHAT SANCTIONS IN TERMS OF OTHER PROGRAMS SHOULD WE BE PREPARED TO INVOKE. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE OF OUR AID PROJECTS HAS BEEN SLOWED BECAUSE OF AFGHAN CONCERNS ON RELATED ANTI-POPPY AGREEMENTS -- AND A SECOND MAY POTENTIALLY BE AFFECTED BY THE SIGHTING OF OPIUM POPPIES IN THE PROJECT AREA (THIS IS NOW THE SUBJECT OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN USAID AND GOA). MY OWN VIEW IS THAT WE MUST PURSUE WITH IMAGINATION AND ENERGY ALL POSSIBLE AVENUES TO LESSEN THE THREAT OF AFGHAN OPIUM TO OUR OWN COUNTRY. MOREOVER, IN MY VIEW, AID MUST NOT UNDERTAKE ANY PROGRAM HERE WHICH WOULD IN ANY WAY PROMOTE POPPY CULTIVATION. BUT AT THE SAME TIME WE MUST REALIZE THAT THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OBSTACLES IN AFGHANISTAN TO RAPID PROGRESS IN ELIMINATING OPIUM CULTIVATION ARE IMMENSE AND WILL TAKE MANY YEARS TO OVERCOME. WE WILL HAVE TO TEMPER OUR DETERMINATION WITH PATIENCE AND REMEMBER THAT OUR ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE AFGHANS IN THIS AREA DEPENDS TO A VERY LARGE DEGREE ON OUR ABILITY TO CONVINCE THEM THAT WE CARE ABOUT THEIR BASIC NATIONAL INTERESTS: THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND THEIR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS. ALL OF US HERE AGREE THAT WE MUST KEEP THE
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AFGHANS AWARE OF OUR COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS. IN FACT, I BELIEVE ONE ARGUMENT WHICH IS USEFUL IN A COUNTRY LIKE THIS IS THAT TO THE EXTENT THERE CAN BE A FREER EXPRESSION OF VIEWS WITHIN THE SOCIETY, THE PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT ARE ENHANCED. WE HAVE ESTABLISHED A "HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL" IN THE MISSION WHICH WILL EXAMINE THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ALSO SPECIFIC PROJECTS WE MIGHT UNDERTAKE TO IMPROVE THAT SITUATION. WHILE ON THE ONE HAND, THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HERE IS NOT TRULY BAD, IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT THE DAOUD REGIME IS A TIGHTLY RUN DICTATORSHIP. BUT IT IS ALSO FAIR TO SAY THAT IN THIS TRADITIONAL SOCIETY, WHICH HAS NO DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE AND WHICH IS SPLIT ALONG MANY TRIBAL AND ETHNIC LINES, FULL RECOGNITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS WE UNDERSTAND THEM IS A LONG WAY OFF. MOREOVER, THE HUMAN RIGHTS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO AFGHANS AT THIS STAGE OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT ARE THOSE INVOLVING BASIC ECONOMIC, EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH NEEDS -- FIELDS IN WHICH WE CAN BE OF HELP.

9. OTHER. THERE WAS LITTLE DEBATE ON OUR USIS PROGRAMS, AND I MUST SAY THAT I AM PLEASED WITH THE LEVEL AND EXPERTISE OF OUR USIS PROGRAMS HERE IN TERMS OF THE ASSIST THEY GIVE OUR OTHER OBJECTIVES IN AFGHANISTAN. REGARDING AFGHAN ATTITUDES IN INTERNATIONAL FORA, WE AGREED THAT THERE HAS BEEN PROGRESS ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES OF GREAT CONCERN TO US SUCH AS GUAM AND PUERTO RICO. WE CANNOT EXPECT AFGHANISTAN TO DIVERGE SIGNIFICANTLY FROM ITS FELLOW NON-ALIGNED, MOSLEM, LESS-DEVELOPED AND LANDLOCKED COLLEAGUES IN THESE FORA. (AT BEST, THEY MIGHT BE CONVINCED TO ABSTAIN IN OUR BEHALF.) FINALLY, WE AGREED THAT WE HAVE NOT BEEN AS SUCCESSFUL AS WE WOULD LIKE IN PROMOTING AMERICAN EXPORTS TO AFGHANISTAN. WE LIKE TO THINK THAT THESE SHORCOMINGS SPRING FROM CIRCUMSTANCES INHERENT IN THE AFGHAN SCENE AND NOT FROM ANY LACK OF TRYING ON OUR PART. WE WILL, NEVERTHELESS, TRY HARDER.

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10. IN CONCLUSION, WE HAVE PLENTY OF DIFFICULTIES FACING OUR PROGRAMS HERE, BUT WE THINK WE ARE ON THE RIGHT TRACKS. BUT LEST ANYONE THINK THAT IS A SELF-CONGRATULATORY POSTURE, IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT THIS IS A FRAGILE COUNTRY BOTH POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY. WHILE DAOUD IS IN POWER, WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO SEE PROGRESS IN AREAS IMPORTANT TO US. AFTER DAOUD, PERHAPS THE DELUGE AND CERTAINLY EVER MORE NEED FOR US TO EXHIBIT FIRM ADHERENCE TO OUR OBJECTIVES AND FLEXIBILITY IN THE WAYS WE TRY TO ACHIEVE THEM. END SUMMARY.

11. KEY POLICY ISSUES. TWO CONCERNS ARE CENTRAL TO OUR INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN.

(A) THE SUCCESSION QUESTION. ALTHOUGH MOHAMMAD DAOUD'S TERM OF OFFICE HAS FIVE YEARS TO RUN, THE PRESIDENT IS 69 YEARS OLD, THE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS HE HAS CREATED ARE ONLY TENUOUSLY ESTABLISHED, AND GROWING IMPATIENCE AND DISSATISFACTION EXIST OVER THE SLOW PACE OF PROGRESS. IT IS THUS MOOT WHETHER DAOUD WILL FINISH HIS TERM. THE RECENTLY APPOINTED VICE PRESIDENT, SYED ABDULILAH (ALSO MINISTER OF FINANCE) IS WIDELY DISLIKED AND HAS ALMOST NO PERSONAL POWER BASE. AS FOR THE OTHER MEMBERS OF DAOUD'S HANDPICKED CENTRAL COUNCIL OF THE PARTY OF THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION (THE SOLE LEGAL POLITICAL PARTY), NONE STANDS OUT AS AN OBVIOUS, LASTING SUCCESSOR.

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THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS, THEREFORE, THAT WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS DAOUD COQWD PASS FROM THE SCENT (FROM NATURAL OR POLITICAL CAUSES) LEAVING IN HIS WAKE A BITTER SUCCESSION STRUGGLE. IN SUCH A SITUATION, THE DANGER EXISTS THAT THE SOVIET UNION MIGHT INTERVENE TO BACK A CANDIDATE OF ITS LIKING. IN ANY SUCCESSION STRUGGLE, THE AFGHAN MILITARY WOULD BE THE KEY ELEMENT. ALTHOUGH THE MILITARY IS 100 PERCENT DEPENDENT ON THE SOVIET UNION AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA FOR ARMS AND MOST TRAINING, THE UPPER ECHELONS OF THE MILITARY ARE FIRMLY NATIONALISTIC. THE CHANCES ARE THUS PROBABLY BETTER THAN EVEN THAT IN ANY POWER VACUUM, A MILITARY-BACKED SUCCESSOR WOULD BE QUICKLY CHOSEN -- TO PRECLUDE TURMOIL AND SOVIET INTERFERENCE.

IN SHORT, THE POLITICAL FABRIC OF AFGHANISTAN IS FRAGILE. CHANGE COULD OCCUR SUDDENLY -- AND BLOODILY -- AND THE U.S. COULD WELL FACE DIFFICULT DECISIONS AS TO HOW IT SHOULD LEGITIMATELY RESPOND.

(B) NARCOTICS. NO AREA OF U.S. INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN IS MORE FRAUGHT WITH DIFFICULTIES. NO DOMESTIC PRESSURE EXISTS ON THE

AFGHAN GOVERNMENT TO ELIMINATE ILLICIT PRODUCTION AND TRAF-
FICKING. ON THE CONTRARY, ANY SERIOUS, NON-GRADUAL EFFORT TO
ELIMINATE PRODUCTION COULD RISK A POLITICAL BACKLASH IN CERTAIN
SENSITIVE REGIONS, THREATENING INTERNAL SECURITY. SENSITIVE TO
THESE REALITIES, THE GOVERNMENT ACTS ONLY IN RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL
PRESSURES, LARGELY FROM THE U.S. AND UN, AND HAS LINKED ANY
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MAJOR CURTAILMENT OF POPPY CULTIVATION TO FOREIGN-FINANCED CROP
AND INCOME SUBSTITUTION PROGRAMS.

IT WILL THUS TAKE YEARS, IF NOT DECADES, TO ELIMINATE POPPIES IN
AFGHANISTAN, AND WE MAY NEVER TOTALLY ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVE. THE
FINANCIAL BURDEN ON THE WEST ALSO COULD BE STAGGERING. WHILE
WE MUST PROD, CAJOLE AND GIVE AID TO THE AFGHANS, WE MUST BE
CAREFUL NOT TO DO SO TO THE POINT THAT OUR PRESSURES BECOME
COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE AND TO THE DETRIMENT OF ALL OUR OTHER IN-
TERESTS IN THIS COUNTRY.

AT PRESENT, OUR RESOURCES TO HANDLE OUR NARCOTICS RESPONSIBIL-
ITIES ARE INADEQUATE. A FULL-TIME FSO IS BADLY NEEDED TO HANDLE
THIS FUNCTION, AND WE UNDERSTAND OUR REQUEST FOR HELP HAS
BEEN APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT, ALTHOUGH TO DATE NO FORMAL WORD
HAS BEEN RECEIVED.

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